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ABSTRACT

This document, which is based on the findings of a study of 10 further education (FE) colleges throughout the United Kingdom, is intended to help FE colleges review and enhance their curriculum for 16- to 19-year-old students in General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-level (Advanced Level) courses. Discussed first are the following reasons for enhancing FE curricula: responding to technological advances, improving national standards, developing skills, adding a European dimension, recognizing the distinctiveness of students aged 16 to 19 as a group, and providing additional benefits for students. The next two sections describe selected enhancements identified at sixth-form colleges and general FE colleges and enhancement programs leading to non-A-level qualifications (including General National Vocational Qualifications, National Vocational Qualification units, and General Certificates of Secondary Education). Examined next are strategies for delivering the following types of enhancements: induction programs, tutorials, learning support facilities, and core skills provision. The remaining sections cover funding/costing enhancements, evaluation/review, obstacles to/opportunities for enhancement, and recommended enhancement and delivery strategies. Appendixes contain examples of published core skills; sources of external and accreditation enhancement schemes; lists of audit, evaluation, and review questions to evaluate curricula offered to full-time FE students; and acknowledgements. (MN)

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GORDON HOLDING

Enhancing GCE A-level programmes

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The theme of this bulletin is that the curriculum offer comprises not only individual subjects but also a range of other learning opportunities which can be identified as enhancements.

It is intended to help colleges to review their curriculum offer to 16-19 year old students on GCE A-level courses.

The term enhancement is used here to describe everything in the college curriculum of the A/AS-level student, other than the timetabled teaching and learning of the A/AS-level subjects themselves. The emphasis is on young people in full-time education although the value of enhancement programmes to part-timers, including adults, is also recognised.

Enhancements to the curriculum examined in this bulletin include:

- induction programmes
- tutorials
- core skills
- sport, cultural and recreational programmes
- GCSEs
- GNVQs, which although qualifications in their own right, will be included as enhancements here

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Colleges involved:

Newbury College

Richmond upon Thames College

The Ridge College

The Sixth Form college, Colchester

Stafford College

Peterlee College

East Birmingham College

Yale Sixth Form College

Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College

Runshaw Tertiary College

Most of the research for this bulletin is based upon ten colleges (including sixth-form colleges) and ten schools' sixth forms. The findings will be of interest to curriculum managers within FE, particularly at a time when a major government review of qualifications is under way.

Reasons for enhancements

The existing GCE A-level system is based on students studying three subjects in depth over a two-year period. Students moving on to undergraduate level then possess considerable knowledge and understanding of their subject; they are able to progress quickly and achieve high standards on degrees. However, this system does not provide breadth for students who choose a different course of study at degree level nor does it accord with the changing nature of many degree courses which provide modular programmes over a broad area. A-level students and graduates are likely to require a much wider range of skills, knowledge and understanding in their eventual working lives than specialist A levels and degrees can offer.

FEDA is currently developing credit proposals, begun by the former FEU, which could provide a framework which would encompass *all* qualifications and facilitate unitisation and greater flexibility.

The main reasons identified from the project for offering an enhancement programme as part of the whole curriculum for A level are:

Technological advances

These require a workforce that can be responsive to new technology to take advantage of rapid change. The broader a person's understanding and the more transferable their skills, the more likely they are to be able to adapt.

Improving national standards

Research for the NACETT shows that Britain must continue to increase the number of qualified people to the standard, at least, of their competitors in order to match the competition.

Developing skills

The acquisition of core skills is an essential foundation for learning; for employment and for participating in a technologically sophisticated society. A study commissioned by the CVCP in 1994 revealed concern among industrialists that recent undergraduates had concentrated upon subject knowledge to the detriment of communication, teamwork and leadership skills. It was observed that these skills were developed, if at all, through activities such as sports and student societies. The same concern can be expressed about A level. An A-level curriculum which does not address the skills needs of its students is failing to prepare them for their future lives.

The European dimension

A major effect of the creation of a single European Market has been to open up employment opportunities for British citizens within a much wider geographical area. Educational planning needs to be responsive to both regional and European needs with a curriculum content that reflects a European perspective. *A Curriculum for Europe* (FEU, 1994) explores how changes within the EU should influence curriculum content. An A-level enhancement programme allows students to develop skills for, and knowledge of, the European market.

Distinctiveness of the 16-19 age group

Young people require certain enhancements because they are at a key developmental stage in their lives. Effective tutorial systems for personal support, and the provision of recreational and cultural activities are very important to this.

Asked to justify an enhancement programme, one manager wrote: *'The aims of the core studies programme as a whole are to enable the students, in negotiation with their personal tutors, to put together for themselves a programme of activities which (taken in conjunction with their academic subjects) will provide them with a broad and balanced range of activities, developing the skills and areas of knowledge and understanding that are identified in the college's entitlement document. This is to ensure that (as far as possible) their educational experience is suited to their individual needs, prepares them for their future life and employment and is intrinsically enjoyable.'*

Benefits for students

Students have to present themselves as marketable commodities in a competitive environment. Both tutors and students agreed that the enhancements appearing on UCAS forms, *curriculum vitae* and RoAs are a positive help to students in this.

Other benefits to students:

- core skills can help students to study effectively and produce quality assignments
- personal support in tutorials can help students plan their work programme, help maintain attendance levels and reduce drop-out
- additional learning programmes can broaden general knowledge which in turn can benefit subject knowledge
- sporting, cultural and recreational activities can help to reduce stress and provide opportunities for friendship which can lead to a greater commitment to the college and learning programme

Types of enhancements

This section examines enhancements that lead to non-A-level qualifications or to no qualifications at all.

Nine of the ten project colleges in the study offered structured programmes of educational, cultural, recreational and sporting activities in addition to A levels. These carried various titles including 'Enrichment', 'Extension Studies', 'Activities Programme' and 'Supplementary Studies'. They took up a two or two- and-a-half-hour slot on first-year timetables.

Sixth-form colleges

Sixth-form colleges place particular emphasis on these programmes where they constitute a much larger proportion of their work than in a general FE college. Interview evidence suggests that this may be one of the factors affecting the images of colleges in the minds of prospective students and therefore their. A college offering a wide variety of enhancements does attract students, giving the impression to prospective students that it is, in the words of one student, 'a buzzing place'.

General FE colleges

General FE colleges show a diverse picture in terms of enhancement provision. Some provide the full range of enhancements. Others offer few, if any, additional taught classes or modules specifically designed as educational, cultural, recreational or sporting enrichments although they may allow students to infill into some existing vocational classes.

The range and number of enhancements offered, particularly in sixth-form colleges, can be remarkable. One college in the study offered over 80 classes or activities and ran 20 sports teams. Students could explore topics such as Philosophy or Astronomy not covered by their A-level studies, and take part in drama and sporting activities or perhaps learn to play a musical instrument.

Some colleges, especially sixth-form colleges, make these programmes compulsory but most staff and students questioned thought that they should be optional. One approach would be to give students a choice of enhancements, but specify a minimum number of modules and hours.

An important part of an enhancement programme is the emphasis on personal, social and moral education. This is often implicit in a college, evident in its ethos, and the values of students and staff. One college in the study runs an extremely popular two-day residential for its students to help build good working relationships. Community service opportunities are another way of developing personal and social skills and were available in at least three of the project colleges.

One popular enhancement (four of the ten project colleges offered it) is A-level General Studies. Colleges offered it in Year 2 of the A-level programme, timetabling it for less than half the time allocated to other A-levels. The main reasons for offering it were:

- to broaden the general knowledge of the student. As mentioned already, general knowledge can provide benefits for students that carry over into their specialist subject learning and are an important reason for offering an enhancement programme as part of the whole curriculum

- to improve a student's likelihood of obtaining university entrance. One college had carefully researched the acceptability of A-level General Studies to higher education and as a result was convinced of its value in the A-level programme

Smithers and Robinson at Manchester University have undertaken research on General Studies in which they expressed some reservations about the syllabuses. Members of staff responsible for this subject are advised to read *General Studies: Breadth at A level?* (The Engineering Council, 1993).

Enhancement programmes leading to non-A level qualifications

All colleges in the study offered students a range of opportunities to gain qualifications as well as their principal A/AS-level subjects (see also Appendix 2). These included:

GNVQ AND NVQ UNITS

These potentially provide an extremely valuable supplement to an A-level programme, enabling students to demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding in an occupational area. GNVQ units can support A levels by encouraging students to explore the practical applications of theory. Several colleges in the project already offer students the opportunity to add GNVQ units to their A-level programme.

However, one college commented: *'We have serious concerns about mixed Advanced GNVQ and A-level programmes since the modes of delivery and assessment procedures are so different.'*

There is evidence that where staff teach on both A-level and GNVQ programmes, teaching and learning methods successfully employed on GNVQs are being copied for A-levels. It is worth considering how far any differences in delivery are due to the assessment and learning requirements of the programmes themselves or to the traditions of A-level work. While there is potential for confusion in the minds of students, they may benefit in both employment and HE from developing skills in a range of different learning and assessment methods.

GCSEs

All the project colleges offered students the opportunity to take GCSE subjects in addition to their A levels. In all but one of the colleges there were at least twice as many students taking

mathematics as any other subject. This confirms a widely held perception that lack of achievement in mathematics is a major barrier to progression for many A-level students. English was the second most frequently taken subject.

FEDA is currently conducting a study of GCSE provision in colleges.

Open college credits

In Surrey, a group of sixth-form colleges has been working with a local open college federation to develop units which will broaden the A-level curriculum. Students who achieve unit learning outcomes are awarded open college credits.

Other qualifications and awards

A range of other qualifications and awards was on offer in the project colleges. They included:
CAD and **manufacturing** qualifications
basic **counselling** qualifications
modern language qualifications, such as Foreign Languages at Work
Community Sports Leaders Award
sports coaching qualifications
secretarial qualifications
first aid certificates
Young Enterprise awards
IT awards, such as CLAIT
the **Duke of Edinburgh Award** scheme
outdoor pursuits awards
Royal School of Music awards
LAMDA awards
Certificate of Further Studies in French and German
modules from the **DVE**

Students interviewed appreciated an enhancement programme when it:

- allowed them to enjoy an activity away from examination pressures
- gave them the opportunity to pursue a new or existing interest and develop new friendships
- supported their skills development
- increased their personal 'marketability', perhaps by inclusion on a RoA

Some parts of enhancement programmes do not lead to any qualification. These are the most vulnerable to cuts when budgets are tight. Current FEFC funding methodology steers colleges towards accreditation for these programmes to enable them to gain funding units but FEFC funding of enhancements remains an area of some confusion. Colleges feel that they have received some mixed messages. Some college managers claimed that FEFC had told them that enhancements to A levels, including those leading to qualifications, should not be funded. A written statement of clarification from FEFC would help to clear up this confusion.

Delivery

This section is based on the way enhancement programmes are delivered in colleges. In typical school sixth forms the main differences in delivery from colleges were:

- a compulsory additional programme consisting of elective modules (for example, sport or cultural activities) is timetabled for at least two hours per week in Year 1. In Year 2, this is often replaced by A-level General Studies
- voluntary activities such as clubs for particular interest groups and sports activities. These are often run out of school hours.

Colleges tend to have larger classes than schools and so their teacher contact hours are slightly higher

The enhancements looked at in this section are:
- induction programmes
- tutorials
- learning support facilities
- core skills provision

This does not include a description of sport, cultural and recreational enhancements.

Induction programmes

Induction programmes meet a variety of needs for both the student and the college. For the student it is an opportunity to learn about their course, the college, the teaching and learning methodology and transfer from GCSE to GCE A level.

Some colleges confine induction to practical tasks such as timetable completion and an introduction to the college site and services. However, it can also usefully include:

- work on individual learning plans and records of achievement
- diagnostic assessment of basic skills and identification of specialist support requirements (FEDA is currently working on diagnostic assessment in colleges)
- one-to-one discussions between tutors and students. These are essential at an early stage to identify potential problem areas such as:
  — medical conditions
  — domestic and financial problems
  — demanding part-time jobs

Time taken for induction varies considerably between institutions. At one sixth-form college, induction is considered 'a continuous process which begins as early as year 10 in partner schools and continues throughout the first year in college'.

It is valuable to have one or more induction days in the July before enrolment but this is not always possible. For colleges surrounded by schools with sixth forms, access to year 11 pupils may be impossible. Students may not apply to come to college until the enrolment week, so necessitating a concentrated induction process at the beginning of term.

One approach is to use several days for a general college induction followed by several weeks of induction from tutors and subject specialists after classes have started. One college saw its induction lasting six weeks: 'Six weeks is chosen because the period must be long enough to enable accurate diagnosis of progress to be made, but short enough to enable students to transfer to other subjects or programmes of study'. College induction programmes outside individual subjects can be tapered over the first few weeks to run alongside these subjects.

Tutorials

In all the colleges sampled, course or group tutors provided personal support for students (in addition to any subject tutorials). Tutor group size normally ranged from 15 to 20 students, although one college had some groups of 11 students. Colleges usually allocated one hour each week for a tutorial group to meet. However, it is helpful if additional time is allocated to tutors for individual review sessions with students.

Tutorials perform a range of functions which can involve:

- day-to-day administrative tasks, e.g. tutors may be responsible for the daily registration of students
- providing a channel for communication between staff and students
- pastoral and welfare support
- help for students to manage their learning programme
- regular feedback and review of student progress with at least one individual interview between student and tutor each term. Most colleges use tutorials to facilitate RoAs and action planning
- assessment and development of core skills (these may be related to the external accreditation schemes referred to in Appendix 2)

- running personal and social education (PSE) programmes in, for example, health or environmental education, as part of a continuing educational development programme
- liaison with careers specialists
- guidance on preparing *curriculum vitaes* and form filling, interview techniques for HE or jobs
- references for HE or jobs
- preparation for, and debriefing after, work experience

Learning support facilities

FEDA's work with colleges suggests that A-level teachers use a wide variety of teaching and learning methods, no longer simply offering a didactic, whole-group, chalk-and-talk approach. There is a strong trend in colleges towards more flexible learning with centrally organised learning support facilities designed for students to use. These facilities can include:

Learning resource centres

LRCs often incorporate the college library and provide a wide range of IT and study pack materials. They may include areas where students can work together on group projects. LRCs are used in different ways in different colleges. Some colleges timetable students and their teachers into these centres for part of their timetabled subject teaching time which can be effective because it ensures that learning is properly planned and supported. Also students are less likely to be absent.

Other colleges timetable students into the centre to be supervised by a member of the support staff who is not a subject specialist. This is a less costly option which may count as guided learning hours. However, it may result in less effective learning, particularly for weaker or less well motivated students. Where specialist teaching staff are not available, there is a danger that LRC staff and materials will not be co-ordinated with the needs of students as identified by subject lecturers.

Basic skills/learning support workshops

Colleges have found that many students need additional support to reach the skill levels required for A level. Students may need help with a specific problem rather than with a whole skill area so workshops can be used on a drop-in basis. Alternatively, individual students or groups of students with diagnosed needs, can have appointments made for them.

There is some concern in colleges that attending such workshops can be stigmatising and students respond by refusing to attend them. An alternative is in-class support from basic skills specialists as part of subject teaching.

Supervised private study

In some sixth-form colleges (not those in the project) there is still some timetabled private study, supervised by members of the teaching staff whose timetables are light or who happen to be free at the time. This does not seem to be an effective use of their expertise.

Core skills provision

Nine out of the ten project colleges had tried to include core skills provision within their A-level curriculum. A single approach for the delivery of all core skills didn't work so a combination of the following methods was used:

- additional drop-in basic skills workshops, particularly useful for help with communication skills or numeracy
- the use of self-study packages, available in the learning resources centre

- work in tutorials which can also be used to co-ordinate evidence of core skill achievements for assessment and RoAs

- additional timetabled modules in, for example, modern languages or IT

- delivery through A-level subjects, of skills involving numeracy, communication and problem solving

Discrete core skills provision has sometimes proved unpopular with students and there appears to be a trend towards subject integration of these skills in order to tackle this problem and cope with resource restraints.

Core skills for A-level students can be accredited by:

- developing core skills units accredited by an open college network

- using GNVQ core skill units

- using the Youth Award Scheme or the University of Liverpool Enrichment Programme (see Appendix 2)

The question of which set of core skills to adopt also needs to be considered. Appendix 1 contains examples of published lists of core skills which have certain common features (for example, communication skills and numeracy) but also significant differences. The set of core skills most frequently used by colleges was developed by the NCC and later adopted by NCVQ for GNVQs (*excluding for the time being modern languages):

- communication
- numeracy
- problem solving
- information technology
- personal skills
- modern languages

Funding and costing

Funding enhancements

Current restraints on educational budgets have understandably raised fears about the future funding of enhancement programmes. Two different views about the funding methodology were identified:

1. Funding for A-level subjects was intended to meet the cost of the student's whole programme and so any enhancement should be paid for from the income gained from these subjects.

2. Qualifications should be introduced for the enhancements wherever possible to enable additional funding units and output funding to be claimed. For example, the Youth Award Scheme: funding would be claimed by use of appropriate load bands or the additional on-programme units identified last financial year by FEFC. As indicated earlier, there is scope for further clarification from FEFC here.

Some colleges dismissed this strategy for two reasons:

- the costs of accreditation and entry fees could be great and would have to be offset against any funding received

- further accreditation of enhancements would only increase pressure on students.

FEDA considers it possible to accredit many enhancements without involving stressful examinations. Such accreditation and consequent funding could raise the status of the enhancements, give students recognition for their efforts and provide additional evidence for progression. Colleges are recommended to consider seeking accreditation for programmes that are currently not accredited.

Costing enhancements

Colleges involved in the project were asked to cost their enhancement programme which they found a very difficult exercise. Two colleges which did produce figures showed the following:

College A (FE college)
cost of enhancements: 12.4% of A-level programme budget

College B (large sixth-form college)
cost of enhancements: 11% of the college budget

Tutorials generally appeared to cost at least five per cent of an A-level programme, with additional teaching costing at least a further five per cent.

An initial approach to costing enhancements might therefore be:

1. to assume that all central support costs (for example, library provision, accommodation and administration) are effectively 'top-sliced'. They come from the college's central budget and so do not count as an enhancement cost

2. to calculate enhancement time on the basis of timetabled provision for A-level students extra to that designated for A-level subjects. Thus, in a college where an A-level student was timetabled for 19 hours:
time allocated to three A-level subjects: 15 hours
tutorial programme 2 hours
enrichment programme 2 hours
the enhancement time would be 4 hours per week per student

3. On the assumption that tutor groups and enrichment programme groups averaged 15 students, the cost of A-level enhancement provision could be calculated as:
total number of A-level students
x 4 hours average rate per teacher
divided by 15
and multiplied again
by the number of weeks

Any consumables, programme management time and other expenditure in addition to staff costs, would also have to be added in.

It is important to remember that some enhancements do not require additional classes. Instead they make demands upon A-level subject teachers (for example, to incorporate core skills) or for central learning support.

All colleges are generally committed to including tutorials in student programmes, so it is other areas, particularly those enrichment classes that do not lead to additionally funded qualifications which are are vulnerable to cost cutting.

Evaluation and review

Quality of provision

Many schools and colleges now have quality assurance systems to ensure that the their education and training meet the needs of students and make the most effective use of staff and resources.

Data which is likely to be used to review GCE A-level subjects include:

- examination results
- class sizes
- attendance figures
- drop-out rates

It can be easy to overlook enhancements when conducting a review. However, a whole curriculum review needs to incorporate them if it is to provide a complete picture.

A suggested structure for evaluation and review of enhancements is set out in Appendix 3. A longer version was trialled by ten FEDA project colleges.

Relevance of an enhancement programme

It can be difficult to quantify how relevant an enhancement programme is for students after they have left college. However, one college in the project had sent a questionnaire to former students. Their replies stressed how vital they had found the core skills work and how useful it had been to study A-level General Studies. They also commented on the additional qualifications they had obtained at college which they felt had helped them to get into HE.

Funding enhancement programmes

All the colleges in the project were determined to continue with their enhancement programmes. The main opportunity to obtain funding for activities was seen as the accreditation of further courses. The implications of funding A-level General Studies in addition to the three A-level programme, had led colleges to reconsider the number of hours allocated to it. Also, the movement towards the unitisation of qualifications and the modularisation of delivery have opened up a wide range of additional qualifications to students.

Conclusions and recommendations

Obstacles

Colleges in the project accept that it is desirable to enhance their A-level programme. The problems which they face are:

- funding may not be available for a full enhancement programme
- students are reluctant to devote time to activities unless they see a direct link with HE or employment prospects
- staff may not be supportive of an enhancement programme if they see resources devoted to non-subject-specific A-level activities
- the practical implications of offering students units of vocational programmes (e.g., registering students for GNVQs) may be very expensive.

Opportunities

There are various opportunities for policy makers and HE to promote enhancements:

- **HE** institutions could specify their requirement for students to have core skills and more breadth in their studies and recruit students accordingly
- **FEFCs** could ensure that the present funding situation for enhancements is clarified and the funding mechanism considered when the tariff is reviewed
- **SCAA** and the A-level examining boards could ensure that the design specification for an A level allows it to be delivered in, for example, 25% of the available programme time of a typical student. This would allow a student taking three A-levels, 25% of their time for other activities It would also be helpful if modules from modular A levels could be accredited as free-standing units and be made available for inclusion in enhancement programmes. This could be a very cost-effective from of delivery
- **vocational awarding bodies** may wish to give further consideration to the appropriateness of A-level students taking individual units of their qualifications and publish advice to colleges accordingly

The way forward

Colleges could use the types of enhancement and delivery identified here as a starting point for a review or development of their own enhancement programme. The model for a whole-curriculum delivery and the audit suggestions in Appendix 3, should provide clear guidance.

The value of an enhancement programme is the breadth it lends to the whole curriculum offer. It allows students the flexibility to develop their skills and abilities while pursuing the academic rigour demanded by A-levels.

A whole-curriculum approach

One approach towards constructing a whole curriculum of sufficient breadth and balance is presented below. It draws on the practices found in colleges and assumes that students would take up to three A levels, or equivalent AS subjects. If fewer than three A levels are taken, further vocational modules could be added.

Induction

All students should have an induction programme leading from the educational guidance process in which their action plan and learning agreement were negotiated. This induction should include a general introduction to the college, specific subject inductions, an explanation of the rationale for and structure of the whole programme, methods of recording achievement and a meeting between each student and their tutor. Icebreaking activities could be included.

Tutorials

Each week students should have a tutorial period. Its main purpose should be the management of learning (including the recording of achievement), communicating with students, supporting them, monitoring their attendance and progress and helping them to prepare for progression. Applications to HE and organising careers advice and guidance will be important tutor tasks. During each term the tutor should hold private meetings with individual students to review progress.

Core skills workshops/classes

Some core skills will be delivered through A-level subjects, others through an electives programme or vocational modules . However, it is likely that students will also need some discrete provision. For example, a college might require all its A-level students to attend IT classes for X weeks; it might insist that students taking particular combinations of subjects attend specific core-skill workshops.

Learning resource centre

The college develops a policy of timetabling each A-level group and tutor into a LRC at regular intervals for appropriate tasks intended to extend the students' range of learning skills.

A modular electives programme

Access to modules of vocational programmes

Offering students appropriate study units from a GNVQ could provide complementary and contrasting experiences to their A-level subjects. This may be particularly appropriate for students taking two A-level subjects.

Colleges, especially those with many A-level students, can offer their own modular programme. Students could select from a range of modules such as:

- industry and careers-related activities (for example, enterprise initiative)
- European studies and modern languages
- environmental issues
- health and social care
- art, music, drama and media studies
- sporting activities
- voluntary community work
- philosophy and religious studies
- social and political education

The above modules could be used as the basis for theme days or weeks, see also on the next page.

Theme days or weeks

This approach takes a theme explored by students over a set period when the normal timetable is suspended. and can use activities such as environmental audits, enterprise initiatives, sporting competitions, residentials and drama/music production.

Appendices

1: Published lists of core skills

1. Integrated, assignment-related

GNVQ Core skills

Communication
Application of number
Information technology
Working with others
Improving own learning and performance

Note: These are quite close to the proposals in NCC's Core Skills 16-19, *which also included modern foreign languages.*

2 Work-related skills, attitudes and understanding

CBI Core Elements

Values and integrity
Effective communication
Application of numeracy
Applications of technology
Understanding world of work
Personal and interpersonal skills
Problem-solving
Positive attitudes to change

3 Transferable skills for personal effectiveness

BTEC Common Skills

Managing and developing self
Working with and relating to others
Communicating
Managing tasks and solving problems
Applying numeracy
Applying technology
Applying design and creativity

4 Whole-curriculum related mapping of experience

Crossmaps Scheme Skills

Communication
Personal effectiveness
Problem-solving
Scientific capability
Technological capability
Application of number
Understanding world of work
Creative, visual performing arts
Physical education and leisure
Values and integrity

5 National Targets for Education and Training

(Aim 3 of the National Targets)
Self-reliance
Flexibility
Breadth
in particular through fostering competence in core skills.

2: External and accreditation schemes

GNVQ units, particularly in core skills, are increasingly being used to enhance A levels. Some colleges used **locally** designed schemes which can be OCN units or part of formal progression compacts with local universities. **National** schemes which offer accreditation include:

The Youth Award Scheme — Further Education Award

An information pack is available from: ASDAN, 27 Redland Hill, Redland, Bristol BS6 6SU Tel: (01272) 239 834

The University of Liverpool Curriculum Enrichment Programme

Further information is available from: The Director, Curriculum Enrichment Programme, The University of Liverpool, PO Box 147, Alsop Building, Brownlow Hill, Liverpool L69 3BX Tel: (051) 794 4622

The Diploma of Achievement

This was launched in February 1995 and is validated by the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board, Purbeck House, Purbeck Road, Cambridge CB2 2PU Tel: (01223) 411211

RoA arrangements were in place in most of the schools visited, although not always externally accredited. The following schemes were in use in these schools as well as the two above:

- Crossmaps
- C&G Diploma of Vocational Education
- Lancaster University HE Project
- John Moores University Project (How Do I Choose?)
- Schools Challenge (Royal Show)

3: Audit, evaluation and review questions

Introduction

An 'enhancement' refers to everything in the student's college curriculum , other than the teaching and learning of A/AS-level subjects including, for example, induction programmes, personal tutorials, GCSEs or GNVQs,.

The questions have been designed with full-time students in mind, but you are likely to want to adapt them to the circumstances of *your* college.

References to A level include AS level.

Audit

1 The whole A-level programme

1.1 How many hours of timetabled teacher contact is each A-level subject allocated?

1.2 How many hours of timetabled teacher contact would a typical student on a predominantly A-level programme experience?

1.3 Does the college specify a maximum and minimum number of contact hours?

1.4 List the enhancements available to A-level students, state which are compulsory, unavoidable, or optional, and the time devoted to each.

Categorising enhancements:

1 Support for learning
2 Support for learners
3 Support for progression to HE and career
4 Personal, social and moral education
5 Culture, recreation and leisure
6 Continuing educational development
7 Core skills

1.5 How many students are currently enrolled on A-level programmes? (full-time/part-time, day/evening and first, second or one year)

2 Tutorials

This section is concerned with personal and course tutorials rather than tutorial work within individual A-level subjects.

2.1 What is the time allocation for each tutor to undertake tutorial work?

2.2 What is the average number of students allocated to each tutor?

2.3 What are the purposes of tutorials? educational guidance/active tutorial programme/recording achievement /action planning/quality assurance feedback/deliver core skills/ registration/communication/discipline pastoral /welfare/preparation for HE /careers guidance?

2.4 What staff development and support do you give to your tutors?

3 Core skills

3.1 Is there specific provision to help A-level students develop core skills?

3.2 If yes, which core skills are addressed?

3.3 Explain how this is done (Mapped and integrated into subjects? Separate classes? Part of tutorial programme? Tackled in LRCs?)

3.4 How does the college accredit or record the students core skill achievements?

(Using an RoA, GNVQ core skill units, using an external award scheme)

4 GNVQs

4.1 What GNVQs does the college offer?

4.2 Can A-level students mix GNVQ and A-level programmes?

4.3 What are the timetabling and/or flexible learning arrangements making such mixing possible or impossible?

4.4 If any GNVQ units and A-level modules are taught together because of overlapping content, list them.

4.5 If there are any students on predominantly A-level programmes who also take individual GNVQ units, please set out the benefits and disadvantages of such arrangements.

4.6 Summarise any further developments in mixed A-level/GNVQ provision that have been under consideration.

5 GCSEs

5.1 Do any students take GCSEs and A levels concurrently?

5.2 Summarise any evidence available about the success rates of students taking mixed GCSE and A-level programmes, including GCSE resits.

6. A-level General Studies

6.1 How many A-level students take A level General Studies?
What percentage is this of the A-level cohort?

6.2 How many A-level students take AS level General Studies?
What percentage is this of the A-level cohort?

7 Induction programme

7.1 What is the length of the induction programme for A-level students?

7.2 List the contents of this induction. (For example, learning contract (if not already completed), explaining enhancements, finalising individual student learning programmes, diagnostic assessment of basic skills, introducing recording of achievement, icebreaking activities, introduction to college services and facilities?)

8 Additional qualifications and accreditation of achievement

This section refers to qualifications other than GCE A levels, GCSEs, GNVQs or core skill qualifications. It also covers any other accreditation/validation arrangements that you have for enhancements such as OCN credits and other achievements recorded in a student RoA.

8.1 Briefly summarise any additional accreditation offered to A-level students.

List these accreditation opportunities, giving the number of students and the percentage of your GCE A-level cohort:
a) taking them
b) achieving them

8.2 Set out any validation arrangements for student RoAs.

8.3 For each accredited learning programme in 8.1, set out the rationale for including it in the programme.

9 Progression

9.1 What guidance is given on progression to HE, including the completion of UCAS application forms?

9.2 What careers education is provided for students? How does the college ensure professional careers guidance is available to them?

10 Other enhancements

These will include activities and classes which do not lead to qualifications, such as recreational provision.

10.1 Briefly summarise any other provision offered to A-level students . List them, give the number of students and the percentage of the A-level cohort participating in them.

10.2 Which of the above enhancements:
- give an arts experience
- aid understanding of science and

Acronyms

CAD: computer-aided design
CVCP: Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals
DVE: Diploma of Vocational Education
EU: European Union
FE: Further Education
FEDA: Further Education Development Agency
FEFCs: Further Education Funding Councils
FEU: former Further Education Unit now merged into FEDA
GNVQs: General National Vocational Qualifications
HE: Higher Education
LRCs: Learning Resource Centres
NCC: National Curriculum Council
NACETT: National AdvisoryCouncil for Education and Training Targets
NCVQ: National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NVQ: National Vocational Qualification
RoA: Record(ing) of Achievement
SCAA: Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority
UCAS: University and Colleges Admissions Service

technology
- are sports/physical recreation tackle moral issues
- aid understanding of society
- support student's personal and social development?

11 Financial considerations

11.1 Which of the enhancements earn income from FEFC?

11.2 What is the cost of:
- the A-level tutorial programme?
- other enhancement classes/activities?

11.3 What proportion of the overall cost of the A-level programme is accounted for by enhancements?

Evaluation of enhancements

Having collected sufficient data, the next step is to evaluate it. This can be done by setting up performance indicators; by surveying a sample of students and by seeking the views of the staff. Views of former students would also be valuable.

Performance indicators could include:

- the percentage take up of each enhancement
- absenteeism rates on enhancement activities
- percentage of students working effectively to construct their RoA
- percentage of students dropping out of elective programme enhancements
- achievement rates and where appropriate grades, on additional qualifications and award schemes
- class sizes, where appropriate
- the costs of enhancements (predominantly staff salary costs)

Obtaining the views of students

This can be done by administering an anonymous questionnaire to all the A-level students or to a representative sample of them. You might wish to seek the assistance of social science staff who have expertise in survey techniques. Some suggested questions follow but these will have to be customised to meet the circumstances of each college. The outcomes of any survey could be discussed with students in tutorials to give feedback and explore some issues more fully.

Obtaining the views of staff

A survey could also be undertaken of staff opinion. It could make use of an adaptation of the student questionnaire. Alternatively, an open meeting of staff could be used to obtain opinions.

Student questionnaire

The college is reviewing the enhancements that it provides for its A-level students. Please answer the following questions to enable us to take account of your views.

1 For each of the enhancements at present offered:

- What do you think are the benefits of this feature of your programme?
- What are the disadvantages of including this in your programme?
- Should we continue to offer it?
- If yes should it be compulsory or optional

2 Please list any other enhancements that should be offered to students.

3 Which of the enhancements that you have listed under Question 2 should be compulsory?

4 Of the two statements below, please indicate which one is closest to your point of view by circling its number.

- I prefer to concentrate upon my A/AS Level subjects without any other additions to my programme
- I welcome the opportunity to undertake other activities in addition to my A/AS Level subjects

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Further information

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5 If you chose statement (2), please indicate which of the following you would agree with by circling its number. You should choose one statement only.

- Where possible, additions to my A/AS-level programme should enable me to gain further qualifications
- Additions to my A/AS-level programme should not require me to tackle further qualifications
- I would like to undertake a range of additions to my A/AS-level programme some leading to further qualifications and some not

Additional comments

6 Please add any further comments that you would like to make about the programme that we offer to our A-level students.

Review of enhancements

The purpose of this review is to consider what changes, if any, should be made to the enhancement of students' A/AS-level programmes. The outcomes of these audit and evaluation sections and the experiences of other colleges as set out in this publication, can be used as a basis for this review. The questions set out below may also be helpful..

1 Which enhancements are essential features of student programmes and which must be retained?

2 Are there any elements of existing programmes which are not supported by students and staff?

3 Are there any elements where the audit and evaluation have revealed problems which need to be tackled, for example, high drop-out rate, unacceptably high costs, low rates of achieving accreditation?

4 What resourcing restraints are we likely to be operating under? Can we afford to develop further enhancements? Must we cut back our existing programme?

5 Are we delivering our enhancements in the most effective way?
- through A-level subjects?
- can be delivered through tutorials?
- require additional classes?
- require central learning support?
- require other college services?

6 Should we attempt to gain accreditation for more enhancements?

7 Do we need to explore opportunities for A-level students to access GNVQ units?

8 Are we tackling all the categories of enhancement identified on page 10 and how do we compare with the approach on page 12? Is there anything identified there that we are not doing? If so, should we be doing it and in what way?

9 If all our students took A level General Studies we could increase our income. Would such a step be justifiable? Would the income cover the cost of provision?

10 Having explored these issues what should next year's programme be?
- what action is required?
- by whom?
- by what date?
- with what resources?
- who must approve these changes?
- who will co-ordinate them?

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